DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 369 580 PS 022 494

TITLE	Nutrition Programs for Children. ERIC Digest.
INSTITUTION	ERIC Clearinghouse on Elementary and Early Childhood Education, Urbana, Ill.
SPONS AGENCY	Office of Educational Research and Improvement (ED), Washington, DC.
REPORT NO	EDO-PS-94-9
PUB DATE	Jun 94
CONTRACT	RR97002007
NOTE	3p.
PUB TYPE	Information Analyses - ERIC Clearinghouse Products (071)
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	Cognitive Ability; *Federal Programs; Low Income Groups; *Nutrition; *Nutrition Instruction; Program Descriptions
IDENTIFIERS	Child and Adult Care Food Program; Department of Agriculture; ERIC Digests; Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program; Food and Nutrition Service; Food Stamp Program; Nutrition Education Training Program; *Participation Rates; School Breakfast Program; School Lunch Program; Special Supplemen Food Program Women Infants Child; Summer Food Service Program

ABSTRACT

Despite recognition of the importance of good nutrition for children's cognitive development, many children in America are poorly nourished. This digest reviews programs designed to address this problem and suggests ways to improve child nutrition and school meal programs. Federal programs administered by the Food and Nutrition Service of the United States Department of Agriculture include the: (1) Special Supplemental Food Program for Women, Infants and Children, which provides food and nutrition education to eligible women, and children up to age 5; (2) Child and Adult Care Food Program, which provides nutritious meals for children to age 12 and the elderly; (3) National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program, which provide school meals, most at reduced or no cost; (4) Summer Food Service Program for Children, which provides meals to children from low-income families when school is not in session; and (5) Nutrition Education and Training program, which provides nutrition education to teachers and school food service personnel. Other federal programs are the USDA's Food Stamp Program and the Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program, which teaches food and nutrition information and skills to families with limited resources. The National Food Service Management Institute serves as a resource center for child nutrition programs. Other national initiatives include projects undertaken or curriculum materials produced by the American School Food Service Association, the American Cancer Society, and the National Dairy Council. The administrative burdens of some nutrition programs can be reduced through the implementation of a universal school meal program. School personnel, parents, and dietitians can encourage children's participation in nutrition programs. (BC)

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)
This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.
Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

ERIC Clearinghouse on Elementary and Early Childhood Education

University of Illinois • 805 W. Pennsylvania Ave. • Urbana, IL 61801-4897
(217) 333-1386 • (800) 583-4135 • ericeece@ux1.cso.uiuc.edu

ERIC DIGEST
June 1994 • EDO-PS-94-9

ED 369 580

Nutrition Programs for Children

National Health/Education Consortium

Because research has confirmed a link between nutrition and children's cognitive development, cognitive performance, and ability to concentrate, preschool and school-age children need to receive proper and adequate nutrition. Despite recognition of the importance of good nutrition, however, many children in America are poorly nourished. This digest reviews programs designed to address this problem and suggests ways to improve child nutrition and school meal programs.

Federal Programs Administered by the USDA Food and Nutrition Service

Among programs administered by the Food and Nutrition Service of the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), the *Special Supplemental Food Program for Women, Infants and Children* (WIC) provides food and nutrition education to eligible women, and children up to age five. A report by the General Accounting Office (1992) estimated that, among those participating in the program, WIC reduced the rate of low weight births by 25% and very low weight births by 44%. Data from the Centers for Disease Control suggest that WIC appears to have contributed to a two-thirds decline in childhood anemia over a ten-year period.

The *Child and Adult Care Food Program* (CACFP) is designed to assure nutritious meals for children to age 12, the elderly, and some children with disabilities. Eligible child care centers and homes may receive funds for two meals and one snack per participant per day. Children who attend participating centers receive meals at full price, reduced price, or free depending on their family income. A USDA study found that CACFP provided meals and snacks that were significantly better in nutritional quality than those served in nonparticipating centers.

The *National School Lunch Program* (NSLP) and *School Breakfast Program* (SBP) were created to serve nutritious school lunches and breakfasts. The household income of children at participating schools determines whether they receive full- or reduced-cost or free meals. In 1992, almost 93,000 schools offered NSLP; about half that number offered SBP. Approximately half of school lunches and 90% of school breakfasts are served free or at reduced price.

One study (Meyers et al., 1991) examined the impact of the SBP among third through sixth graders in the Lawrence, Massachusetts public schools. The study found that participation in the SBP contributed positively to scores on a test of basic skills and reduced tardiness and absenteeism among participating children.

The *Summer Food Service Program for Children* (SFSPC) provides nutritious meals to children from low-income families while school is not in session. The program serves breakfast, lunch, dinner, or snacks, and follows the same meal pattern as the NSLP and SBP.

The *Nutrition Education and Training* (NET) Program provides nutrition education to teachers and school food service personnel so they can, in turn, teach children about good nutrition. NET funds can be used to develop classes on food, diet, and health; teach cafeteria workers to prepare more nutritious meals; and purchase instructional materials. A USDA study found that the NET program led to increased levels of nutritional knowledge and positively affected food preferences in children.

Other Federal Programs

The USDA's *Food Stamp Program* (FSP) is the nation's most important food assistance program. Eligibility requirements are uniform nationwide. Among households that receive food stamps, 92% have gross incomes below the poverty level. Families with children receive 83% of all FSP benefits, and children constitute about half of all individuals on food stamps (Greenstein, 1992). FSP participation has been found to improve nutrition for low-income households. According to the USDA, nutrients in home food supplies are increased 20 to 40% by food stamps.

The *National Food Service Management Institute* (NFSMI) was authorized by Congress and established in 1990. The institute is located at the University of Mississippi and serves as a resource center for child nutrition programs.

The *Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program* (EFNEP), which was established in 1968, is administered by the Extension Service of the USDA and is conducted through the Cooperative Extension System at land-grant universities in every state and territory. Extension professionals train paraprofessionals and volunteers who teach food and nutrition information and skills to families and youth with limited resources. EFNEP's objectives are to assist these families and youth in acquiring the knowledge, skills, and changed behavior necessary for nutritionally sound diets (USDA, 1994).

PS 022494

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Other National Initiatives

The American School Food Service Association developed the *Healthy E.D.G.E.* program, which produced a video tape and "how-to" manual that highlight cost-effective ways of incorporating U.S. Dietary Guidelines in school food service, and which emphasize school-community partnerships to promote activities that improve student nutrition. *Healthy E.D.G.E.* also produces manuals that discuss topics related to nutrition.

The American Cancer Society (ACS) has produced a set of nutrition education curricula for the primary, intermediate, and secondary level. These curricula link classroom materials for teachers, such as outlines and visual aids, with materials for food service personnel, such as manuals on developing recipes (ACS, 1990).

The National Dairy Council undertakes various efforts to support nutrition education among citizens. These efforts include nutrition education programs for educators and nutrition programs and materials for health professionals. The Council also produces curriculum materials for use in preschools and the elementary grades.

Improving Program Participation Rates

In order to increase children's participation in nutrition programs, the National Health/Education Consortium (NHEC) suggests that:

- *schools and school personnel* encourage children's participation in child nutrition programs;
- *dietitians and health professionals* help schools develop materials for parents and students concerning nutrition and school meal programs; and
- *parents* encourage their children to participate in meal programs; and work with schools to provide environments that promote healthful eating habits.

The NHEC believes that administrative requirements prevent many eligible schools from participating in child nutrition programs. Two practices that would reduce administrative burdens are: (1) a universal school meal program, according to which all students, regardless of household income, would be allowed to receive meals without charge, thus eliminating the need for determining children's eligibility; and (2) direct certification, according to which schools could certify children for free or reduced-cost meals by obtaining information directly from local Food Stamp or Aid to Families with Dependent Children offices.

Improving Nutritional Standards

Many nutritionists and others who are concerned about children's nutrition suggest that school meals should be higher in fiber and lower in fat, cholesterol, sodium, and sugar; and should average 30% of calories from fat. A USDA (1992a) study found that NSLP meals averaged approximately 38% of calories from fat. An informal study of 612 elementary school menus confirmed the popularity of high-fat foods in school meals (USDA, 1992b).

In order to further improve the nutrition of children in school, the NHEC recommends that:

- *schools and school personnel* remove food vending machines from schools; allow children sufficient time to eat breakfast and lunch; and make the school cafeteria an attractive and inviting place;
- *dietitians and parents* encourage school officials to remove foods of low nutritional value from school vending machines; and urge elected officials to eliminate the whole milk requirement for NSLP meals.

Conclusion

Many effective public and private child nutrition initiatives are in place. However, underfunding, excessive paperwork, and other barriers limit their reach. These barriers can be surmounted if policymakers, educators, dietitians, health professionals, and parents work together to make good nutrition for youth a national priority.

This digest was adapted from: Troccoli, Karen B. (1993). *Eat To Learn, Learn To Eat: The Link between Nutrition and Learning in Children.* Washington, DC: National Health/Education Consortium. ED 363 400.

For More Information

American Cancer Society (ACS) and National Cancer Institute. (1990). *Changing the Course.* Atlanta: ACS.

Federal Interagency ad hoc Committee on Health Promotion through the Schools. (1992). *Healthy Schools: A Directory of Federal Programs and Activities Related to Health Promotion through the Schools.* Washington, DC: U.S. Deptartment of Health and Human Services. ED 360 303.

General Accounting Office. (1992). *Early Intervention: Federal Investments Like WIC Can Produce Savings.* Washington, DC: Author.

Greenstein, R. (1992). *Improving the Health of the Poor: Strategies for Prevention.* Menlo Park, CA: Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation.

Meyers, A., A. Sampson, and M. Weitzman. (1991). Nutrition and Academic Performance in School Children. *Clinics in Applied Nutrition* 1(2, April): 13-25.

U.S. Department of Agriculture, Extension Service. (1994). *EFNEP: Impact and Accomplishments.* Washington, DC: Author.

U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service. (1992a). *Child Nutrition Program Operations Study, Second Year Report: Executive Summary.* Alexandria, VA: Author.

------. (1992b). *Food and Nutrition.* Vol. 22. No. 1-2. Alexandria, VA: Author.

References identified with an ED (ERIC document) number are cited in the ERIC database. Most documents are available in ERIC microfiche collections at more than 825 locations worldwide, and can be ordered through EDRS: (800) 443-ERIC.

This publication was funded by the Office of Educational Research and Improvement, U.S. Department of Education, under contract no. DERR97002007. The opinions expressed in this report do not necessarily reflect the positions or policies of OERI. ERIC Digests are in the